



History of Patrol Squadron TWENTY-SIX



Mission Statement

Patrol Squadron TWENTY-SIX is a diverse element of the United States Navy that performs many assignments. We are the hunters who serve as the eyes and ears of the Fleet. By patrolling in advance of the Fleet's arrival or in its surrounding environment, potential enemies are located, tracked and if necessary, neutralized. Maritime patrol aircraft also serve as a strategic deterrent to conflicts. Team TRIDENT will hunt at great distances and with long endurance, often from remote sites with little support.

The 1940s

VP-26 can trace its lineage back to 26 Aug 1943 when "Bombing Squadron" VB-114 was established at NAS Norfolk, VA. The PB4Y-1 "Liberator", a four engine land-based patrol aircraft, was the **first** aircraft assigned to the squadron. By 1944 the war in Europe was in high gear and patrol planes were needed in the Mediterranean to flush out German U-boats. That spring, the squadron changed headquarters and homeport to Port Lyautey, Morocco with a detachment at Gibraltar. The squadrons **first** combat patrol commenced on 18 Mar 1944. From 17 Jun 1944 to 14 Feb 1945 the squadron played an important part in the turning point of the war. A detachment of six searchlight equipped "Liberators", under the control of (Fleet Air Wing) FAW-7, deployed to Dunkeswell, England to protect the Allied fleet from U-boat attacks during the Normandy invasion. In this role it contributed to FAW-7s record of 18 U-boats attacked, of these, at least half resulted in probable destruction. By Jul of 1944, VB-114 had a detachment of four "Liberators" at Lagens Field, Azores, leaving no aircraft at Port Lyautey. VB-114 flew the **first** combat mission ever flown from the Azores (a neutral Portuguese territory) on 1 Aug 1944. This was accomplished by an agreement with Portugal to operate under the (Royal Air Force) RAF Coastal Command and fly with both British and U.S. markings on the aircraft. That Oct, VB-114s designation changed to "Patrol Bombing Squadron" VPB-114. As the war in Europe ended in May of 1945, the squadron set yet another **first** for the U.S. Navy by becoming one of the **first** units to fly Hurricane reconnaissance missions. A six-plane detachment was sent to Boca Chica, Key West, FL proving the versatility of the command. With the exception of a three-plane detachment ordered to stay at Port Lyautey, Morocco, the rest of the command moved to their new home at NAS Edenton, NC and transitioned to their second aircraft, a single tail version of the "Liberator", the PB4Y-2 "Privateer". In May and Nov of 1946 the squadron changed its designation to "Patrol Squadron" VP-114 and then "Heavy Patrol Squadron" VP-HL-6, as well as receiving its **first** tail code, "HB". Jan 1947 saw the squadron moving again, this time to NAS Atlantic City, NJ. 26 Jun 1948, VP-



HL-6 took on a more compassionate mission, becoming an active participant in "Operation Vittles" otherwise known as the "Berlin Airlift". The squadron flew numerous missions bringing medical supplies to airfields in the Allied Zone of Occupation where they were then transferred to unarmed transport aircraft flying missions into Berlin. As the 40s drew to a close, the squadron saw its designation change to the present one of "Patrol Squadron 26". It

became the third squadron to bear this designation in Sep 1948, the first two being seaplane squadrons in the Pacific during WWII. That following Mar the squadron's headquarters and homeport returned to Port Lyautey. The newly named VP-26 reunited with its three-plane detachment becoming a full squadron once again.

The 1950s

As one war ended so a much colder one began. Yet again VP-26 answered the call. On 8 Apr 1950, a VP-26 PB4Y-2, designated "HB 7" (BuNo 59645), assigned to Det. A, took off from Wiesbaden Air Base, West Germany on an intelligence gathering mission. At 1739 the "Privateer" was intercepted by four Soviet "La-11" fighters while flying at an altitude of 12,139ft over the Baltic Sea, 8km southwest of Liepaja, Latvia. After refusing the "follow me" signals of the fighters the "Privateer" was shot down, becoming the



the **first** publicized shootdown of the Cold War. Subsequent search efforts over a period of 8 days were futile, no survivors or remains were recovered. Unconfirmed reports stated that as many as 8 of the 10 missing crewmembers were recovered from the sea and forwarded to the Soviet Union for interrogation. The crew's ultimate fates have never been determined but will never be forgotten. On 8 Apr 2000, Latvia's coastal city of Liepaja unveiled a memorial to honor the 10 man crew of "HB 7", the first but not the only Trident crew to be on eternal patrol. That summer VP-26 relocated to NAS Patuxent River, MD and changed its tail code to "EB". The following year the squadron began transitioning from its "Privateers" to the P-2V "Neptunes". Along with the new aircraft came a new home. On 11 Jan 1952, VP-26 moved to its present homeport of NAS Brunswick, ME, becoming the **first** squadron to be ordered aboard the newly re-commissioned base. With a lull in hostilities abroad, the squadron had time to prepare, train, and hone their skills until the next call came. In Oct 1954, while participating in Operation LANTFLEX, VP-26's own LTjg Paddock had the distinction of disabling the U.S. submarine Toro (SS 422)



with a small practice bomb that made a direct hit on its periscope. The Toro's skipper presented LTjg Paddock with a mounted portion of the twisted periscope as a souvenir of his skill. As the 50s drew to a close, the squadron would set two more milestones. In 1956, while being deployed to Thule, Greenland, VP-26 became the **first** patrol squadron to fly all 12 aircraft over the North Pole. The following year, VP-26's tail code was changed to its present day "LK" and became the **first** U.S. Navy combat aircraft to land at the newly established NAS Rota, Spain. While on deployment, VP-26 finished out the decade by locating the Russian trawler that had deliberately severed the transatlantic cable in Feb of 1959.

The 1960s

The turbulent 60s again brought more **firsts** for Team Trident. In Mar 1960, while taking part in the NATO ASW exercise DAWN BREEZE, VP-26 became the **first** squadron in nearly a decade to operate from the base at Lann Bihoue, France. But as



tensions accelerated in Cuba, VP-26 was once again called to arms. During the 1962 “Cuban Missile Crisis” several squadron aircraft were deployed on short notice to NAS Key West, FL. They arrived one day after President Kennedy’s Oct 22 1962 televised speech proclaiming that any nuclear missile attack from Cuba would be regarded as an attack by the Soviet Union and would be responded to accordingly. Over 1000 hours were flown in direct support of the Cuban Quarantine. In Oct

1964, VP-26 supplied one aircraft and crew for a month to work with the U.S. Army Special Forces at Pope AFB, NC. The P-2V was specially configured to be used as a high altitude jump platform for the Green Berets. Oct 1965 to Jan 1966, marked the beginning of a new era for VP-26. After fifteen years of faithful service, the P-2V “Neptune” was replaced by the P-3B “Orion”. On 4 Jan 1966, VP-26 became the Navy’s **first** operational P-3B squadron, when Commanding Officer CDR James H. Cullen ferried the **first** P-3B from Burbank, California to Naval Air Station Brunswick. On 24 Nov 1967, VP-26 deployed to Southeast Asia, operating from Sangley Point, Philippines and U-Tapao, Thailand. The Tridents averaged 1500 hours per month flying TEAM YANKEE and MARKET TIME combat patrols. MARKET TIME patrols consisted of seeking out sea born infiltrators from North Vietnam trying to deliver supplies to the Viet Cong along the southern coastline. This required aircrews to fly below 1000 ft, while using radar and their 1,000,000-candlepower searchlight to find and illuminate suspect targets. Shortly after midnight on 6 Feb 1968, a VP-26, P-3B (BuNo 153440) flown by (Combat Air Crew) CAC 8, was lost off the coast of South Vietnam while on a MARKET TIME patrol mission. The “Orion” had crashed into the sea with no survivors. Less than two months later, on 1 Apr 1968, in the same vicinity that CAC 8 was lost, a second P-3B (BuNo 153445) flown by CAC 1 came under fire by a .50 caliber anti-aircraft gun. The P-3B was hit in the starboard wing, knocking out the #4 engine and starting a fire. All attempts to extinguish the flames were unsuccessful. Flying to low to bail out, the crew had to choose between ditching in hostile waters or attempt to make an emergency landing at Phu Quoc airfield less than 20 miles away. Within sight of the runway, and their wing still aflame, CAC 1 prepared to land their stricken aircraft. As the plane banked left onto its final approach, the starboard wing tore off between #3 and #4 engine, and the P-3B tumbled into the sea with no survivors. We will never forget the ultimate sacrifice, in the name of duty that these brave men gave for their country. A college scholarship established by the squadron memorializes them. Upon the squadron’s return on 2 Jun 1968, flight crewmembers were awarded several Air Medals, Vietnam Service, and Campaign Medals. In Aug 1968, the squadron was awarded the “E” for Battle Efficiency from FAW-3.



The 1970s

VP-26’s outstanding performance in the early seventies earned the squadron the Navy Unit Commendation, Chief of Naval Operation’s Safety Award, Meritorious Unit Commendation and an U.S. Atlantic Fleet Citation for Aviation Safety. VP-26 was named the Fleet Air Wing Atlantic recipient of the Chief of Naval Operations Safety Award for 1972. As a result of the squadron’s

tactical efforts throughout 1973 and 1974, Patrol Squadron 26 was awarded the Capt. Arnold Jay Isbell Trophy for excellence in anti-submarine warfare. In 1975, the Tridents became actively involved in the celebration of America's 200th birthday. As well as flying a 13-stared tail cap on their aircraft, over 100 men and women from VP-26 undertook the exterior renovation of the Pejepscot Historical Society Museum on Lincoln Street in Brunswick, ME. This effort earned VP-26 the honor of being designated a Navy Bicentennial Command. As the Fleets only active duty Bicentennial Squadron, the 1976 split-site deployment to Rota, Spain and Lajes, Azores gave VP-26 the opportunity to proudly display its Bicentennial colors throughout the Mediterranean, Europe and the North Atlantic. As a result of this highly successful deployment, the squadron received both the Golden Wrench Award for superior achievement in aircraft maintenance and readiness, and the Capt. Arnold Jay Isbell Trophy for the year of 1976. September of 1977 found the Tridents once more deployed to several strategic locations throughout the North Atlantic. Although primarily based in Bermuda and Lajes, VP-26 maintained detachments for varying lengths of time in the Panama Canal Zone, Ascension Island, Guantanamo Bay, Iceland, and Puerto Rico. Coordinated operations highlighted this deployment as Trident aircrews participated in numerous ASW exercises with NATO and Allied Naval Forces. Returning to NAS Brunswick in early 1978, the Tridents were awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation, both the Silver and Golden Anchor Awards for retention excellence and the CNO Aviation Safety Award for operations conducted throughout 1976 and 1977. In Mar 1979, VP-26 began transitioning from the P-3B to the state of the art ASW aircraft, the P-3C Update II. On Jul 26, 1979 VP-26 accepted the **first** of the squadron's Update II aircraft, and in Dec 1979 had the honor of receiving the 500th production P-3 (BuNo 161010).



As the Fleets only active duty Bicentennial Squadron, the 1976 split-site deployment to Rota, Spain and Lajes, Azores gave VP-26 the opportunity to proudly display its Bicentennial colors throughout the Mediterranean, Europe and the North Atlantic. As a result of this highly successful deployment, the squadron received both the Golden Wrench Award for superior achievement in aircraft maintenance and readiness, and the Capt. Arnold Jay Isbell Trophy for the year of 1976. September of 1977 found the Tridents once more deployed to several strategic locations throughout the North Atlantic. Although primarily based in Bermuda and Lajes, VP-26 maintained detachments for varying lengths of time in the Panama Canal Zone, Ascension Island, Guantanamo Bay, Iceland, and Puerto Rico. Coordinated operations highlighted this deployment as Trident aircrews participated in numerous ASW exercises with NATO and Allied Naval Forces. Returning to NAS Brunswick in early 1978, the Tridents were awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation, both the Silver and Golden Anchor Awards for retention excellence and the CNO Aviation Safety Award for operations conducted throughout 1976 and 1977. In Mar 1979, VP-26 began transitioning from the P-3B to the state of the art ASW aircraft, the P-3C Update II. On Jul 26, 1979 VP-26 accepted the **first** of the squadron's Update II aircraft, and in Dec 1979 had the honor of receiving the 500th production P-3 (BuNo 161010).

The 1980s

In early Mar 1980, the squadron deployed to Kadena, Okinawa Japan while maintaining a detachment in Diego Garcia. This marked the **first** time since 1967 that an East Coast patrol squadron deployed to South East Asia. The detachment at Diego Garcia was in response to the Soviet build up of military forces in the Persian Gulf. Earlier that year President Carter proclaimed the "Carter Doctrine," declaring that the U.S. was willing to use military force if necessary to prevent "an outside power" from conquering the Gulf. Throughout the deployment the Tridents operated out of the Philippines, Middle East, and the West Coast of Africa. The squadron returned to Brunswick in September and received the Navy Expeditionary Medal for its activities in the Indian Ocean. In May 1981, VP-26 became the **first** squadron to deploy the new Harpoon missile capable P-3C to the Mediterranean Theater. The Harpoon missile system was incorporated specifically to eliminate Soviet surveillance trawlers in the event of war. The Tridents returned home in Oct to receive the 1981 CNO Safety Award. On 1 Jul 1982, VP-26s Special Projects detachment (Old Buzzards) broke away and became a squadron of its own. The newly formed squadron was established "Special Projects Patrol Squadron" VPU-



1 after being a VP-26 detachment since 1969. Also in Jul 1982 the Tridents deployed to Keflavik, Iceland. Three crews were subsequently detached for three months to the Western Pacific to augment WESTPAC Harpoon capabilities. Before leaving Keflavik VP-26 crews had operated from Bodo, Andoya and Stavanger, Norway, Thule, Greenland;

Machrihanish and Kinloss, Scotland; Mildenhall and St. Mawgen, England; Valkenburg, Netherlands; Nordhols, Germany; Rota, Spain; Lajes Field in the Azores; Missawa and Kadena, Japan; Cubi Point, Philippines; and U-Tapao, Thailand. Returning to Brunswick in Dec 1982 VP-26 became the **first** occupant of the newly built Hangar #5. In Nov 1983 VP-26 deployed to Bermuda, with detachments to Lajes, Azores and Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, where they averaged over 1000 flight hours per month for three consecutive months. VP-26 again deployed to Kadena, Japan in Jan 1985. During this time VP-26 operated with units of the Seventh Fleet in the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans, and on several occasions operated simultaneously from every Seventh Fleet deployment sight. In Jun 1986 VP-26 deployed to Rota, Spain and Lajes Field, Azores. While conducting operations throughout the Mediterranean and North Atlantic, aircrews visited France, the United Kingdom, Greece, Senegal, Iceland, Bermuda, Italy, and Gibraltar. While at home in 1987 the squadron maintained a very busy operational tempo with detachments to Jacksonville, Bermuda, Iceland, Lajes, Ascension Island, Puerto Rico, and Greenland. VP-26 attained a one hundred percent sortie completion rate during its detachments. In Nov 1987, the Tridents deployed to Keflavik, Iceland. While on deployment, the crews achieved an impressive ASW mission record against a number of the most modern Soviet submarines. The deployment was rounded out by the reception of another Golden Wrench Award and a second Battle "E" for the year of 1988. In Jun 1989, VP-26 deployed to Rota, Spain and Lajes, Azores for another record setting deployment, accumulating over 5,400 flight hours in six months. The squadron also supported sixteen operational detachments to England, Ascension Island, Sicily, Turkey, and Africa, at one point maintaining a detachment for eleven consecutive weeks. The highlight was an unprecedented six weeks in Souda Bay, Crete supporting Sixth Fleet operations. The squadron was then awarded its third Battle "E" Award.



The 1990s

As the world scene changed in the 1990's VP-26 faced new challenges. With the disintegration of Yugoslavia, VP-26 saw three consecutive deployments to Sigonella, Sicily. Detachments were sent to Saudi Arabia to monitor the United Nations embargo against Iraq. Over the Adriatic Sea VP-26 enforced the embargo against the former Yugoslavia in the **first** continuous armed patrols in the Mediterranean since World War II, carrying live torpedoes and Maverick missiles. The squadron also was among the **first** to conduct Electro-Optic surveillance patrols overland and to visit emerging Eastern European democracies. On 7 Nov 1990, VP-26 departed NAS Brunswick to conduct a unique tri-site deployment, distributing Trident aircraft in Key West, Florida; Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico; and Lajes Field in the Azores. While performing narcotics detection and monitoring operations out of Key West and Roosevelt Roads Trident aircrews located two suspicious vessels which were seized and confirmed to have held a total of over 1300 kilos of cocaine with an estimated street value of over thirty million dollars. VP-26 returned to Roosevelt Roads for a two-month detachment in Aug 1991 for continued narcotics detection and monitoring operations in support of the nation's "War on Drugs". The squadrons 10 May 1992 split-site deployment to Jeddah, Saudi



Arabia and Sigonella, Sicily earned the Tridents a Meritorious Unit Commendation for operations in the Adriatic Sea, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean. VP-26 forged history once again during this time as the **first** P-3 squadron to fly missions in the Adriatic Sea during Operation MARITIME MONITOR. Additionally, the Tridents accomplished the **first** ever Portuguese-United States joint minex in the MAP/CIS joint exercise. VP-26 was awarded the Joint Meritorious Unit Commendation for meritorious service in support of Operation DESERT CALM, United Nations sanctions against the former Republic of Yugoslavia, and operations with deployed Marine Amphibious Readiness Groups and Carrier Battle Groups from Sep 1993 to Feb 1994. The Tridents flew over 620 armed sorties during this time, including daily Maverick Surface Unit Combat Air Patrol, in support of Operation SHARP GUARD, amassing 4,800 flight hours. Making its mark once again, VP-26 completed the **first** ever live Maverick warshot by an operational P-3 squadron. In Oct 1994 VP-26 magnificently demonstrated the concept of "fly and train as you would fight" by flawlessly executing a formation (Mining Readiness Certification Inspection) MRCI. This was the **first** MRCI flown in close formation by any VP squadron in the previous five years. In Dec 1994, Team Trident was called upon to conduct a SAR effort 950 miles off the coast of New England. The 450-foot Ukrainian freighter, "Salvador Allende" had been taking on water in stormy seas. VP-26 flew over 85 hours in 6 days in support of this effort, during which two people were rescued after their vessel had sunk. In Jan 1995, the Tridents returned to Sigonella for their third consecutive Mediterranean deployment. VP-26 flew over 5,000 hours and 468 armed sorties in support of operations SHARP GUARD and DENY FLIGHT. From Jul 1995 to Feb 1996 the Tridents began an intense seven month transition to the P-3C Update III aircraft. In Aug 1996 VP-26 continued to set records during their tri-site deployment to Iceland, Puerto Rico, and Panama. The Tridents achieved the highest drug interdiction rate ever with more than 1.9 billion dollars in cocaine and marijuana busts. Cocaine busts alone were in excess of 38 metric tons, equivalent to over 20% of estimated U.S. consumption. The crews in Keflavik, Iceland had the highest total contact time on "real world" submarines of any U.S. Maritime Patrol Aircraft squadron in the last 4 years. VP-26 was also the **first** ever U.S. military unit invited to participate in the Norwegian national exercise FLOTEX 96. The squadron was then awarded its fourth Battle "E" Award for the year of 1996. The Tridents returned home to Brunswick, Maine in Jan 1997 for



another successful home cycle. The Tridents quickly began preparations for their future deployment to Sigonella in Feb 1998. Tridents flew over 180 flights in Operations JOINT GUARD/FORGE in support of the United Nations and Implementation peacekeeping forces on the ground in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Tridents logged the historic 500th flight in support of operation DELIBERATE GUARD. The Tridents returned home safely in Aug 1998 and began a rigorous Inter-Deployment-Training-Cycle (IDTC).

During the IDTC the Tridents kept busy preparing for the next deployment, training both maintenance personnel and aircrew. As the IDTC drew to a close in Jul of 1999, the Tridents were ready for the upcoming deployment. For this "Millennium" deployment, the Tridents were split between Keflavik, Iceland and NS Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico. Those Tridents deployed to Iceland were fortunate enough to support NATO operations throughout the Atlantic. The Tridents traveled to such places as Andoya, Norway; Kinloss, Scotland; Lan Bihoue, France; Rota, Spain; and Sigonella, Sicily. The Tridents of the Caribbean were busy as well, tracking

suspected narcotics traffickers both in the air and on the sea. VP-26 conducted many detachments to Manta, Ecuador to carry the counter-narcotics mission to the Eastern Pacific.

The 2000s

The crowning achievement of the Trident's "Millennium" deployment was the attainment of 275,000 mishap-free flight hours in over 38 years (2000)-a worldwide record which encompasses all types of aviation, civilian and military. In preparation for its next Mediterranean deployment, VP-26 trained all 12 aircrews in the new P-3C Update III AIP (**Anti-surface-warfare Improvement Program**) aircraft. By providing the P-3C with state of the art improvements in Command, Control, Communications, and Intelligence; surveillance and survivability, AIP is propelling maritime patrol into the 21st century. The squadron received its **first** AIP aircraft in Sept of 2000. VP-26 also conducted extensive in-house training for all its crews to properly use the SLAM Missile, Maverick Missile, and Online Harpoon.



Feb 2001 saw the Tridents returning to Sicily. Deployed Tridents supported the United Nations operations Deliberate Forge and Joint Guardian and participated in several multinational exercises throughout Africa and Europe. Over the course of the six months in Sigonella, the Tridents flew greater than 5000 mishap-free operational hours, achieving a 93 percent sortie completion rate. They made operational detachments to 15 different countries including: Rota, Spain; Souda Bay, Crete; Nordholtz, Germany; Visby, Sweden; Nimes, France; Kinloss, Scotland; Malta, and Turkey. Tridents flew a variety of operational missions over the Atlantic Ocean, Baltic Sea, Black Sea, North Sea, and the Mediterranean. These missions included: direct support for two U.S. carrier battlegroups and various NATO surface combatants, overland reconnaissance in support of NATO Stabilization Forces (SFOR) and NATO Kosovo Forces (KFOR), and over 20 multinational exercises with 24 different nations. On August 10th, 2001, the Tridents of Patrol Squadron 26 arrived back at their home base of Brunswick, ME, in preparation for a highly charged interdeployment cycle. Following the events of September 11, VP-26 moved to a heightened state of readiness. The squadron supported the war on terrorism

by taking part in various Homeland Defense operations. VP-26 did everything from locating and identifying high interest merchant shipping traffic approaching the United States to watching over potential terrorist targets on American soil. Tridents continued their efforts on the war on terrorism into 2002. On June 8th, members of VP-26 took the opportunity to reflect on past tragedies with a visit to "Ground Zero". Eleven Tridents were promoted there, exemplifying their commitment to the protection of US citizens and their Allies.



In August 2002, Patrol Squadron Twenty-six began its six month, split-site deployment in NAS Keflavik, Iceland and NAS Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico. Tridents embraced the challenge of a long-distance working environment that would spread them

across 6200 nautical miles and seven time zones, from Souda Bay, Crete to Manta, Ecuador. Aircrews took part in missions ranging from armed SUCAP in the STRoG to SRO to the "Wars on Drugs and Terrorism". Efforts in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific led to Tridents' interdiction of 12,641 KG's of Cocaine with a street value of over \$3.4 Billion Dollars. VP-26 also played a major role in the introduction of AIP to the SOUTHCOM AOR. The squadron executed over 5000 flight hours, including 83 ASW events, and was nominated for the 2002 Phoenix Award for Maintenance Excellence and the 2002 Battle Efficiency Award. At top of its military achievements, VP-26 provided phenomenal "Community Support" through "Manta Santa" (200 families clothed, 1678 children received toys, and \$800 dollars donated for a local pediatric hospital), "Sisters of Mother Teresa" aid in Reykjavik, and multiple "Adopt-a-School" affiliations.



On 4 April 2003, Team Trident bore witness to its fifty-seventh change of command as CDR Matthew J. Carter relieved CDR Sean S. Buck as Commanding Officer of Patrol Squadron 26. In attendance were friends & family of Team Trident and members of Fire Department, New York Ladder 10, with whom VP-26 has an affiliation. The firefighters presented to the command a cross, cut out of steel from the World Trade Center, as well as a photograph of the tragedy, as a reminder of what we're fighting for. As tensions with Iraq increased, Tridents prepared themselves and their families for the possibility of re-deploying. On April 7th, it happened, the Tridents were

called back into action. Two crews and maintenance support personnel departed for the Mediterranean to participate in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. "The CNO recently told the entire Navy to ensure we are combat ready at all times and ready to enter the fray when called. VP-26 followed that order by augmenting forward deployed units. The Trident worked side-by-side with crews from five VP squadrons supporting two carrier battle groups. VP26 commenced their detachment in Rota, Spain, and then later in Sigonella, Sicily, they flew armed support for supply boats transiting the Strait of Gibraltar. While in Sicily, the Tridents flew multiple missions supporting of both the Harry S. Truman and Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Battle Groups. Shortly after arriving at Naval Station Rota, Spain, VP26 personnel discovered that a mobile field hospital had been built to receive wounded coming from Operation Iraqi Freedom. The facility began receiving its first wounded war fighters on March 29th. Although well equipped to provide medical support, the hospital needed toiletries, uniform items, underclothes and other basics. Many wounded patriots arrived with nothing but the clothes on their back, as a result, Operation Rota Comfort began. Initially, knowledge of the need for supplies passed by word of mouth and as word spread, a generous outpouring of support evolved into Operation Rota Comfort. The response on NAVSTA Rota was outstanding. Members of VP26 immediately joined the effort and sent an appeal to friends, family and to Team Trident remaining in Brunswick. Within 48 hours, over one thousand dollars had been pledged to the cause. The money provided shoes, shirts, underwear, and over six thousand minutes of phone cards to men and women in the hospital in Rota. Team Trident raised an additional \$1,700 dollars in supplies and funds. On Friday, April 18th, a crew from Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron TWO (VQ-2) transferred the supplies overseas.

On April 16th the Tridents officially assume the duties of the Ready Squadron. In addition to homeland defense duties (when required), the Tridents provided mechanical support to planes arriving from other bases, as well as ground logistics for the associated

aircrews. From May to June of 2003, members of VP26 worked with Habitat for Humanity - Bath Brunswick Area (HFHBBA) to provide suitable living quarters for a family in Bowdoinham. At the house in Bowdoinham, Tridents worked alongside volunteers from the greater Bath and Brunswick area as well as other members of the NAS Brunswick community. Volunteers provide most of the labor, and individual and corporate donors provide money and materials to build Habitat houses.

In August of 2003, Patrol Squadron 26 surpassed 41 years of mishap-free flying, an outstanding record recognized by both the Navy and by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). This makes the Brunswick-based squadron the safest organization throughout all military and civilian aviation. Team Trident has flown over 296,000 hours without a mishap, a commendable achievement and testament to the hard work of over 5400 current and former Tridents. The clock began following an incident in 1962, when a P-2E Neptune caught fire and exploded during a ground maintenance turn. According to the Safety Center report, the cause of the explosion was

the “main primer line of the impeller section was improperly connected.” Fortunately no deaths or injuries resulted and members of VP-26 have worked vigilantly since to prevent another incident. On Sept 17th, Combat Air Crew One (CAC-1) flew to Jacksonville, FL to participate in a Composite Training Unit Exercise (COMPTUEX) event with the USS Enterprise (CVN 65) Carrier Battle Group. The following day, they were joined by a second Trident aircrew, CAC-5, and a maintenance detachment. Their involvement in the exercise, which had been moved off the coast of Florida due to Hurricane Isabel, lasted two weeks and included over seventy-five flight hours between the two crews. On Sept 19, 2003 Patrol Squadron 26 gathered to commemorate the missing crew of “HB 7” in a solemn POW/MIA ceremony. Following an old maritime tradition, a ship’s bell was struck once as the name of each missing crewmember was read. The ceremony concluded with the presentation of a memorial frame containing charcoal rubbings from the monument of names of “HB 7” crewmembers, and artwork of the monument and plane. The Commanding Officer, CDR Matthew J. Carter, accepted the commemorative work on behalf of the command.



By the start of 2004, VP-26 was more than ready for deployment, and at the end of January VP-26 relieved VP-45 in Sigonella, Italy to perform various operations in the Mediterranean. In March, CDR Frank W. Doris relieved CDR Matthew J. Carter as the 58th Commanding Officer of VP-26. For the entire deployment VP-26 flew in Operations DELIBERATE FORGE and JOINT GUARDIAN in Kosovo and Bosnia; in addition, we flew escort missions through the Straights of Gibraltar, escorting USNR ships, ensuring the sea-lanes of communication and commerce remained open. During February and March, Tridents participated in Exercise DOGFISH, a multi-national ASW exercise. In April, CAC 4 conducted a successful Search and Rescue event, saving the lives of over 80 people whose ship had sank. Following that, we sent two crews to the Arabian Gulf to participate in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Also, in May and June, they flew in Operation ACTIVE ENDEAVOR in support of the 2004 Summer Olympic Games.

Patrol Squadron 26 was relieved by VP-16 in Sigonella and returned to NAS Brunswick in the beginning of July, with most of the squadron personnel returning home on the Nations Birthday, July 4th. During the remainder of 2004 VP-26 continued to train. Once again VP-26 surpassed 42 years of mishap-free flying, totaling over 303,420 hours in August. In September, one crew detached,

for six days to NAS Jacksonville, participating in the JTFEX. With Hangar 6 still under construction, Tridents moved in with VP-92. The composition of two squadrons in one hangar proved to be beneficial because VP-26 became the test squadron for Active/Reserve Integration. In December, two crews from VP-92 joined VP-26 as the first reserve crews to be part of an active squadron. Throughout the year, VP-26 earned several awards, including the Global War on Terrorism Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Kosovo Campaign Medal, and two crews earned the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal. The squadron again won the Golden Anchor Award for Retention Excellence.

During its illustrious history, VP-26 has enjoyed success in a wide variety of areas. The Tridents have been recognized with five Battle Efficiency "E" Awards, three Capt. Arnold Jay Isbell Trophies, two Golden Wrench for maintenance excellence, two Navy Unit Commendation, ten Meritorious Unit Commendations, one Coast Guard Meritorious Unit Commendation, three Navy Expeditionary Medal, one AFEM, three JMUA and the Gold, Silver, and Bronze Anchors for retention excellence. But the Tridents take the most pride in their six Chief of Naval Operations Safety Awards; the most recent of which was awarded for calendar year 1989. In the years ahead, Patrol Squadron Twenty-Six "Tridents" anticipates more challenging worldwide deployments to guard liberty and protect our nation's interests with evermore exciting and capable tools in the hands of America's finest sons and daughters.

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Patrol Squadron VP-26, a member of Patrol Wing FIVE, is a Maritime Patrol Squadron with a worldwide theater of operations. Mission areas include: Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW), Anti-Surface Warfare (ASU), Command and Control Warfare (C2W), Command, Control, and Communications (CCC), Intelligence (INT), Mine Warfare (MIW), and Mobility (MOB). Although the "TRIDENTS" are homeported at U.S. (Naval Air Station) NAS Brunswick, Maine, their reputation is known throughout the world. The Tridents have demonstrated success in all of these tasks and in all the services performed, one thing remains constant: Team Trident is at the ready, supporting the mission... Anytime... Anywhere!